



Town of Arlington
Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Board of Health

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Composting Best Practices: Pest Prevention

Type of Equipment to Use

- Use a commercially available plastic tumbler that is not easily accessible to rodents. Rodents burrow in from underground and can access compost piles this way.
- If you use a plastic compost bin that sits flush on the ground, place a layer of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wire hardware cloth under your bin to prevent rodents from burrowing.
- If you use a wooden ground compost bin, line the sides and bottom of your bin with a layer of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wire hardware cloth to prevent rodent burrowing and access from all sides.
- Never use an open top bin if you plan to include food scraps.



*$\frac{1}{4}$ inch wire hardware cloth is available
at local hardware stores*

Safe and Secure Location

- Locate your compost bin in an open area of your property, away from vegetation and lines/runways created by dwellings and fences.
- Keep your compost bin at least 6 feet away from your house.
- Remove any additional rodent attractants on your property such as overgrown vegetation, cluttered conditions, and bird feeders if you are experiencing a chronic rodent issue.
- Place your compost bin in a well-drained area with at least partial sunshine.
- If you have a garden, pest proof it by enclosing it with a fence and removing any low hanging, ripe produce in a timely manner.

Composting Food Scraps Safely and Effectively

- Do not put *any* food scraps in open compost piles.
- Never put meat, bones, fat, dairy, or animal waste in your compost pile. Odors from these products attract rodents.
- As you begin a new bin, place a layer of dry leaves or other “brown” (carbon material) on the bottom of your bin. This will allow good drainage along the bottom of the pile.
- When adding scraps to your existing compost pile, add the scraps to the middle, and bury them about a foot deep. Never leave fresh scraps exposed; always cover them with a layer of “browns” (leaves, dry grass, etc). These materials will absorb odors and also help micro-organisms to get to the material faster.
- Alternatively, mix food scraps with soil or finished compost before adding it to your pile.
- Do not let your pile get too dry. Keep each layer damp to discourage nesting.
- Keep your pile well aerated. Turn the pile once a week, if possible, using a pitchfork or use an aerating tool to create air channels throughout the pile. Aerating the pile will also help reduce odors that might attract pests.
- Harvest finished compost when it is ready to discourage pests from nesting in the finished compost.

If You See Evidence of Rodent Activity Near Your Compost Bin

- Discontinue composting food scraps altogether. Continue to compost leaves and garden trimmings, making sure that you are attending to the moisture, aerating and carbon content so that the pile biodegrades at a rate that makes it unappealing for animals to nest in.
- Contact the Health Department to report rodent activity. This allows the Town to more accurately monitor the situation.
- Other methods of diverting food scraps may be available to you. Learn more, or contact Public Works at 781-316-3108.